

## XXIX.

**The Apostolate.**

“That ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”—*1 John i. 3.*

The apostolate bears the character of an extraordinary manifestation, not seen before or after it, in which we discover a proper work of the Holy Spirit. The apostles were ambassadors extraordinary — different from the prophets, different from the present ministers of the Word. In the history of the Church and the world they occupy a unique position and have a peculiar significance. Hence the apostolate is entitled to a special discussion.

Moreover, the apostolate belongs to the great things which the Holy Spirit has wrought. All that the Holy Scripture declares concerning the apostles compels us to look for an explanation of their persons and mission in a special work of the Holy Spirit. Before His ascension Jesus predicted repeatedly that they should be His witnesses only after they shall have received the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary manner. Until this promise is fulfilled they remain hiding in Jerusalem. And when they raise the banner of the cross in Jerusalem and in the ends of the earth, they appeal to the power of the Holy Spirit as the secret of their appearance.

The apostolate was *holy*, and we call them *holy* apostles, not because they had attained a higher degree of perfection, but “holy” in the Scriptural sense of being separated, set apart, like the Temple and its furniture, for the service of a holy God.

By sin many things have become unholy. Before sin entered into the world all things were holy. That part of creation which became unholy stands in opposition to that which remained holy. The latter is called Heaven; that which was made holy is called Church. And all that belongs to the Church, to its being and organism, is called holy.

Hence Jesus could say to the disciples who were about to deny Him: “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” In like manner the members of the Church and their children are called “sanctified”; and in his epistles St. Paul addresses them as *holy* and *beloved*: not because they were sinless, but because God had set them as called saints in the realm of His holiness, which by His grace He had separated from the realm of sin. In like manner the Scripture is called holy: not to indicate that it is the record of holy things only, but that its origin is not in man’s sinful life, but in the holy realm of the life of God.

We confess, therefore, that the apostles of Jesus were set apart for the service of God’s holy Kingdom, and that they were qualified for their calling by the power of the Holy Spirit.

By omitting the word “holy,” as many do, we make the apostles common; we consider them as ordinary preachers; in degree above us undoubtedly, being more richly developed, especially by their intercourse with Christ, and as His witnesses very dear to us, but still occupying the same level with other teachers and ministers of the Church of all ages. And



so the conviction will be lost that the apostles are men different in *kind* from all other men; lost the realization that in them appeared a peculiar and unique ministry; lost also the grateful confession that the Lord our God gave us in these men extraordinary grace.

And this explains why some ministers, at the special occasion of installation, departure, or jubilee, apply to themselves apostolic utterances that are not applicable to their persons, but exclusively to the men who occupy a peculiar and unique position in the Church of all ages and all lands. For this reason we repeat purposely the title of honor, "holy apostles," in order that the peculiar significance of the apostolate may again receive honorable recognition in our churches.

This peculiar significance of the apostolate appears in the Holy Scripture in various ways.

We begin with referring to the prologue of the First Epistle of St. John, in which, from the fulness of the apostolic sense, the holy apostle solemnly addresses us. He opens his epistle by declaring that they, the apostles of the Lord, occupy an exceptional position regarding the miracle of the incarnation of the Word. He says: "The Word became flesh, and in that incarnate Word, Life was manifested; and that that manifested Life was heard and seen and handled with hands." By whom? By everybody? No, by the apostles; for he adds emphatically: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, and shew you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us."

And what was the aim of this declaration? To save souls? Surely this also, but not this in the first place. The purpose of this apostolic declaration is to bring the members of the Church into *connection with the apostolate*. For, clearly and emphatically, he adds: "This we declare unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us." And only after this link is closed, and the fellowship with the apostolate an accomplished fact, he says: "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

The apostle's reasoning is as transparent as glass. Life was manifested in such a way that it could be seen and handled. They who saw and handled it were the apostles; and they were also to declare this life unto the elect. By this declaration the required fellowship between the elect and the apostolate is established. And in consequence of this, there is fellowship also for the elect with the Father and the Son.

This may not be understood as referring only to the people then living; and, regarding Rome, one's position, Bible in hand, is exceedingly weak if he maintain that this higher significance of the apostolate had reference only to the then living, and not in the same measure to us. Indeed, we, upon whom the end of the ages has come, must maintain the vital fellowship with the holy apostolate of our Lord Jesus Christ. Rome errs by making its bishops the successors of the apostles, teaching that fellowship with the apostolate depends upon fellowship with Rome: an error which is obvious from the fact that St. John expressly



and emphatically connects the fellowship of the apostolate with men who have seen and heard and handled that which was manifested of the Word of Life—something to which no Roman bishop can appeal in the present day. Moreover, St. John says distinctly that this fellowship with the apostolate must be the result of the *declaration* of the Word of Life by the *apostles themselves*. And inasmuch as Rome established this fellowship not by the *preaching* of the Word; but by the sacramental sign, it is in direct opposition to the apostolic doctrine.



However, from this it follows not that Rome errs in the fundamental thought, *viv.*, that every child of God must exercise communion with the Father and the Son *through the apostolate*; on the contrary, this is St. John's positive claim. The solution of this apparent conflict lies in the fact that they have not only *spoken*, but also *written: i.e.*, their declaration of the Word of Life was not limited to the little circle of the men that happened to hear them; on the contrary, by writing they have put their preaching into real and enduring forms; they have sent it out to all lands and nations; that, as the genuine, ecumenic apostles they might bring the testimony of the Life which was manifested to all the elect of God in all lands and throughout the ages.

Hence even now the apostles are preaching the living Christ in the churches. Their persons have departed, but their personal testimony remains. And that personal testimony, which as an apostolic document has come to every soul in every land and in every age, is the very testimony which even now is the instrument in the hand of the Holy Spirit to translate souls into the fellowship of the Life Eternal.

And if one says, "Surely in this sense their word is still effective; however, it results no longer in fellowship with the apostles, and by means of this fellowship with Christ, but it points us directly to the Savior of our souls, which is a more simple way," then we oppose this unscriptural notion most energetically.

Such reasoning ignores the body of Christ and overlooks the great fact of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There is not the saving of a few *individual* souls, but a bringing together of the *body* of Christ; and into that body every one that is called must be incorporated. And inasmuch as the King of the Church gives His Spirit now not to separate persons, but exclusively to them that are incorporated, and the inflowing of the Holy Spirit into this body, and principally in the persons of the apostles, took place on Pentecost, therefore no one can receive at the present time any spiritual gift or influence of the Holy Spirit unless he stands in vital connection with the body of the Lord; and that body is unthinkable without the apostles.

In fact, the apostolic Word comes to the soul to-day as the testimony of what they have seen and heard and handled of the Word of Life. By virtue of this testimony souls are inwardly wrought upon, and by their being incorporated into the body of Christ they become manifest.



And this fellowship becomes manifest as a fellowship with the very body of which the apostles are the leaders, in whose persons and in the persons of whose associates the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost.

We know that this view, or this confession rather, is in direct opposition to the view of Methodism,<sup>6</sup> which has pervaded all classes and conditions of men. And the deplorable results have become apparent in various ways. Methodism has killed the conscious appreciation of the sacrament; it is cold and indifferent toward church fellowship; it has cultivated an unlimited disregard for truth in the confession.†<sup>7</sup> And while the Lord our God has deemed it necessary to give us a voluminous Holy Scripture, consisting of six-and-sixty books, Methodism has boasted that it could write its Gospel upon a dime.

This error can not be overcome, except the Word of God become again our Teacher and we its docile scholars. And then we shall learn—

(1) Not that a few isolated persons are being rescued from the floods of iniquity, but that a body will be redeemed.

(2) That all that are to be saved will be incorporated into that body.

(3) That this body has Christ as its Head and the apostles as its permanent leaders.

(4) That on Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out into that body.

(5) That even now each of us experiences the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit only through fellowship with this body.

Only when these things are clear to the soul, the glorious word of Christ, “Father, I pray not for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me *through their word*,” will be well understood. Taken in the current sense, this word has not the least comfort for us; for then the Lord has prayed only for these then living, who had the privilege of personally hearing the apostles, and who were converted by their verbal testimony. We are entirely excluded. But if this petition be taken in the sense indicated above, as tho Christ would say, “I pray not for My apostles alone, but also for them who through their testimony shall believe on Me, now and in all ages and lands and nations,” then it acquires widest scope, and contains a prayer for every child of God called even now and from our own households.

This unique significance of the apostolate is so deeply embedded in the heart of the Kingdom, that when in the Revelation of St. John we get a glimpse of the New Jerusalem, we see that the city has twelve *foundations*, and *on them* the *names* of the twelve apostles of the Lamb—[Rev. xxi. 14](#). Hence their significance is not transient and temporary, but permanent and including the whole Church. And when its warfare shall be ended and the glory

<sup>6</sup> See section 5 in the Preface.—Trans.

<sup>7</sup> † The truth of this is apparent in the Salvation Army, the latest exponent of Methodism. It denies the sacraments, stands isolated from the churches, and does not seem to care for truth in the confession, for it has no confession.—Trans.

of the New Jerusalem shall be revealed, even then, in its heavenly bliss, the Church shall rest upon the very foundation on which it was built here, and therefore bear, engraven on its twelve foundations, the names of the holy apostles of the Lord.

The apostle Paul considers the apostolate so glorious and exalted that in his Epistle to the Hebrews he applies the name of Apostle to the Lord Jesus Christ. “Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.” The meaning is perfectly clear. Properly speaking, it is Christ Himself calling and testifying in His Church. But as the white ray of light divides itself into many colors, so does Christ impart Himself to His twelve apostles, whom He has set as the instruments through whom He has fellowship with His Church. Hence the apostles stand not each by himself, but together they constitute the apostolate, the unity of which is found not in St. Peter nor in St. Paul, but in *Christ*. If we should wish to comprehend the whole apostolate in one, it must be He in whom is contained the fulness of the twelve—the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ the Lord.

Not until we fully grasp these thoughts and live in them shall we be able to understand the epistles of St. Paul, and appreciate his spiritual conflict to maintain the honor of the apostolate for his divine mission. Especially in his epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians he sustains this conflict bravely and effectually; but in such a way that the Methodist can not have eye or ear for it. He rather feels like deploring the apostle’s zeal, saying: “If Paul had insisted less on his title and more humbly applied himself to the conversion of souls, his memory would have been much more precious.” And from his standpoint he is quite right. If the apostolate has no higher significance than to be the first teachers and ministers of the Church, then there can be no reason why St. Paul should waste his strength contending for a meaningless title.

But the undeniable fact that St. Paul’s energetic contending agrees not with the current opinions of the present time ought to make us oppose the notion that, since his contention does not comport with our opinions, he must be wrong! and acknowledge that the standpoint which we can not occupy without condemning the apostle must be abandoned—the sooner the better. St. Paul must not conform himself to our opinions, but our opinions must be modified or altered according to St. Paul’s.



## XXX.

**The Apostolic Scriptures.**

“And I think that I also have the Spirit of God.”—*1 Cor. vii. 40.*

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We have seen that the apostolate has an extraordinary significance and occupies a unique position. This position is twofold, viz., temporary, with reference to the founding of the first churches, and permanent, with regard to the churches of all ages.

The first must necessarily be temporary, for what was then accomplished can not be repeated. A tree can be planted only once; an organism can be born only once; the planting or founding of the Church could take place only once. However, this founding was not unprepared for. On the contrary, God has had a Church in the world from the beginning. That Church was even a *world-Church*. But it went down in idolatry; and only a small Church remained among an almost unknown people—the Church in Israel. When this particular Church was to become again a world-Church, two things were required:

First, that the Church in Israel lay aside its national dress.

Secondly, that in the midst of the heathen world the Church of Christ appear, so that the two might become manifest as the one Christian Church.

By these two things the apostolic labor is almost exhausted. In St. Paul the two are united. No apostle labored more zealously to divest the Church of Israel of its Jewish attire, and no one was more abundant in the planting of new churches in all parts of the world.

The apostolate had, however, a much more extensive and higher calling, not only for those days, but also for the Church of the ages. It was the task of the apostles for which they were, ordained: by giving to the churches fixed forms of government to determine their character; and by the written documentation of the revelation of Christ Jesus to secure to them purity and perpetuity.

This is evident from the character of their labors: for they not only founded churches, but also gave them ordinances. St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye” (*1 Cor. xvi. 1*). Hence they were conscious of possessing power, of being clothed with authority: “And so ordain I in all the churches,” says the same apostle (*1 Cor. vii. 17*). This ordaining is not like that of our official church boards which have power to make rules; or as a minister in the name of the consistory announces from the pulpit certain regulations. Nay, the apostles exercised authority by virtue of a power they consciously possessed in themselves, independent of any church or church council. For St. Paul writes, after having given ordinances in the matter of marriages: “And I think that I also have the Spirit of God.” (*1 Cor. vii. 40*) Hence the power and authority to command, to ordain and to judge in the churches, they derived not from the Church, nor from church council, nor from the apostolate, but directly from the Holy Spirit. This is true even of the power to judge; for, concerning an incestuous person in the church of Corinth, St.

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